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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: KOSTUNICA VISIT TO KOSOVO SPARKS ONLY ISOLATED
PROTESTS ON VIDOVDAN

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica visited Gracanica monastery in Kosovo on June 28 to commemorate Vidovdan. Despite receiving UNMIK permission to visit Kosovo only for personal, religious reasons, Kostunica used the opportunity to make a provocative speech in which he said Kosovo will always be part of Serbia. His visit provoked only a minimal reaction from Kosovo Albanians. Other than the arrest of Albin Kurti and over 100 of his supporters for attempting (unsuccessfully) to block main roads from Serbia into Kosovo, Vidovdan commemorations across Kosovo passed without major incidents. END SUMMARY.

THREE DAYS OF VIDOVDAN FESTIVITIES

¶2. (SBU) On June 28 Kosovo Serbs celebrated the 617th anniversary of Vidovdan, commemorating the defeat of Serbs and their allies by the Turks in the Battle of Kosovo Field in 1389. The festivities lasted for three days, and in addition to the main celebrations in Gracanica and Gazimestan, police report there was a peaceful gathering of 500 - 700 people on June 28 in Kamenica, in eastern Kosovo. Among the participants were Kosovo Serbs currently residing in Serbia who returned to Kosovo for Vidovdan celebrations. On June 27 Patriarch Pavle arrived from Belgrade and attended a poetry reading and competition at Gracanica Monastery. In his sermon that day, hard-line Gracanica-based head of the Raska and Prizren Diocese Bishop Artemije Radosavljevic reportedly said that, "Serbia is one temple and Kosovo is its altar," adding that "there is no temple without an altar."

¶3. (SBU) On June 28 Patriarch Pavle, accompanied by Bishop Artemije, led the Vidovdan liturgy at Gracanica monastery. Afterwards Patriarch Pavle lead the memorial service dedicated to Serb heroes and martyrs at the war memorial at Gazimestan, on Kosovo Field, five kilometers north of

Pristina. PDFSN said the crowd at Gazimestan numbered 500-700 people, making it the largest since 1999. Moderate Kosovo Serb leader Randjel Nojkic of the Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) told PolFSN on June 28 that he was at Gazimestan, along with SLKM colleagues Oliver Ivanovic, Goran Bogdanovic, Vesna Jovanovic and Gojko Savic. He said other participants included Serb leaders from Belgrade, including the head of the Kosovo Coordination Center (CCK) Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, Serbian Minister for Capital Investments Velimir Ilic, Serbian Minister of Religion, chairman of the Serbian negotiating team for economics Nenad Popovic, Slobodan Vucetic of the Serbian Radical Party (SPS), and representatives of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) and the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). Also present were hard-line leaders of the Serb National Council (SNC) Rada Trajkovic, Milan Ivanovic and Marko Jaksic (the two former are E.O.-listed) and deputy head of the Russian Duma Sergey Baburin, a nationalist former Russian general in Afghanistan.

KOSTUNICA VISITED GRACANICA AMID TIGHT SECURITY

¶4. (SBU) Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica entered Kosovo from Serbia through Gate 5 in Kamenica (in between Bujanovac in Serbia and Gjilan/Gniljane in Kosovo) at 11:15 on June 28. He went directly to Gracanica monastery, where he attended a lunch hosted by Bishop Artemije. Kostunica told assembled Kosovo Serbs, many of whom had waited for hours, that Kosovo will always be part of Serbia. Kostunica left Kosovo via Gate 3 at Merdare (the most direct route between Pristina and Belgrade) at approximately 17:00.

¶5. (SBU) According to one Kosovo Serb teacher from a village near Gracanica, Kostunica was well received by the hundreds who saw him speak on the monastery grounds. Local media highlighted interviews with several Kosovo Serbs, however, who expressed disappointment with the visit. One local

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newspaper quoted Borislav Stevic, a Serb from Gracanica, as saying, "Kostunica cannot keep his empty promises. He will leave, while we will remain here and deal with the consequences with our neighbors who are not very happy with his visit." According to US Army community liaison officers stationed at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo Serbs in the Kamenica and Gjilan/Gniljane regions told them that Kostunica does not really care about Kosovo Serbs, and only came to Kosovo to bolster his own political credentials in advance of a possible upcoming election in Serbia.

¶6. (SBU) UNMIK, KFOR and the KPS mounted a heavy security operation on Vidovdan and the days leading up to it. PDFSN said the road from Pristina to Gazimestan was under tight traffic controls, UNMIK and the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) escorted buses carrying Kosovo Serbs from northern Kosovo. PolOff observed numerous KFOR armored vehicles stationed along the road from Pristina to Merdare near the time of Kostunica's departure, as well as hundreds of KPS and CIVPOL both roving and at checkpoints.

OVER 100 ACTIVISTS ARRESTED, INCLUDING ALBIN KURTI

¶7. (SBU) According to police sources, Albin Kurti and supporters of his Movement for Self Determination (SDM) attempted to block main roads leading into Kosovo using their bodies and vehicles in three locations. Police arrested Kurti and 30 other in southern Mitrovica; 82 at Gate 3 near Merdare and 20-25 at Gate 5 near Gjilan/Gniljane. Some of the activists were found guilty, reprimanded and released, although Kurti is being held for 72 hours.

"NEXT TIME WITH A VISA"

¶8. (SBU) The response of the Kosovo leadership has been

restrained. President Agim Ceku told the media on June 27 that Kostunica's visit was a private one for religious purposes, and said that if Kostunica "comes to provoke the feelings of Kosova citizens, I believe the people of Kosova are mature enough and will not respond to any provocations." In a June 29 assembly session, Sabri Hamiti, a member of the Assembly Presidency from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) condemned the arrest of fellow member of the Kosovo Assembly and E.O. listed Emrush Xhemajli from the small People,s Movement of Kosovo (LPK) along with Kurti,s followers. He asked that the Assembly formally condemn Kostunica,s visit, saying that UNMIK had permitted his entry for a private, religious celebration, not a political visit. A junior member of parliament from Hashim Thaci,s Democratic Party of Kosovo lauded the efforts of the SDM, insisting that &those young people did the work our government should have done.8

¶9. (SBU) Kosovo Albanian media coverage of the events was also restrained; one headline concerning the Serbian PM,s visit even quipped, &Next time with a Visa.8 The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) war veterans association issued a statement calling the visit a grave provocation and Kostunica a criminal who, "still keeps bodies of Albanians who were killed by his state." (NOTE. The final sets of human remains exhumed from known mass gravesites in Serbia are scheduled to be repatriated to Kosovo on June 30. END NOTE.).

¶10. (SBU) COMMENT. Kostunica's visit comes at a time when Kosovo Serbs desperately need leadership and guidance. Many were thrilled that Kostunica came to share this holiday with them, while others remain skeptical about his motives and doubt he can carry through on his promises. Kosovo Serbs did enjoy the opportunity Vidovdan provided as one of the few times during the year when they can gather freely and publicly in large numbers and celebrate Serb cultural traditions. Despite a predictable response by Kurti and his

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activists, the events took place peacefully and without major incidents. Most Kosovo Albanians believe they are on track to get what they want by the end of the year, and believe that despite Kostunica's nationalist rhetoric, there is little Serbs can do to stop it. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.
GOLDBERG